

REMARKS

This is in response to the Final Official Action dated September 20, 2006. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the above amendments and following remarks. Applicant appreciates the Examiner's remarks noting that claim 8 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the intervening claims.

Claim Amendments under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116

Independent claim 24 has been amended to include the limitations recited in dependent claims 5-8 and to correct a minor antecedent basis issue. Dependent claims 9, 10, 20, and 21 have been amended to correct some minor antecedent basis issues. Independent claim 25 and dependent claims 5-8 and 13-15 have been cancelled without prejudice. Accordingly, Applicant submits that no new matter has been added.

With this amendment, claim 24 is the only remaining pending independent claim and claims 3, 4, 9, 10, 2, and 21 all depend from independent claim 24. As such, claims 3, 4, 9, 10, 2, 21, and 24 are pending.

Applicant respectfully submits that the above amendments clearly place the present application in condition for allowance and do not require additional search and/or consideration. Specifically, independent claim 24 was amended to correct some minor informalities and to add the limitations recited in dependent claim 8, including the limitations found in intervening claims 5-7, which the Examiner noted contains patentable subject matter. The remaining amendments

either cancel claims or correct some minor informalities. Accordingly, entry of the present amendments is respectfully requested under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116.

Claim Objections

Claims 24 and 25 have been objected to due to an informality. With this amendment, Applicant has cancelled independent claim 25 and has amended independent claim 24 to correct the informality. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that the objection to independent claim 24 may now be withdrawn.

Claim Rejection – 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 24 and 25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. As discussed above, Applicant has cancelled independent claim 25 and has amended independent claim 24 to correct the informality. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection to independent claim 24 may now be withdrawn.

Claim Rejection – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 3-7, 9, 10, 13-15 and 20-25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the prior art disclosed by Applicant as FIGS. 2 and 4 (hereinafter referred to as “Reference 1”) in view of Kawano (US Patent Number 5,526,157, hereinafter referred to as “Kawano”). Additionally, claims 3-7, 9, 10, 13-15 and 20-25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reference 1 in view of Tomosugi (JP 57099042, hereinafter referred to as “Tomosugi”). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

While Applicant disagrees with Examiner's analysis in the present Office Action, Applicant has nevertheless cancelled independent claim 25 as well as dependent claims 5-8 and 13-15 without prejudice. Accordingly, the rejection of these claims is now moot.

Additionally, Applicant has amended independent claim 24 to include all the limitations recited in dependent claim 8 (which the Examiner acknowledged in paragraph 7 of the present Office Action contains allowable subject matter) including all of the limitations of the intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 8 is now in condition for allowance.

Claims 3, 4, 9, 10, 2, and 21 all depend from amended independent claim 24. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits claims 3, 4, 9, 10, 2, and 21 are also allowable by virtue of their dependency from allowable independent claim 21, in addition to their own patentable limitations.

As such, Applicant respectfully submits that the above amendments clearly place the present application in condition for allowance and do not require additional search and/or consideration. Therefore, entry of the above amendments is respectfully requested under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. Early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

In the event the Examiner deems personal contact desirable in disposition of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney at (603) 668-6560.

No fees are believed to be due. In the event there are any fee deficiencies, please charge them (or credit any overpayment) to our Deposit Account No. 50-2121.

Respectfully submitted,

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